

County Profile: Somerset

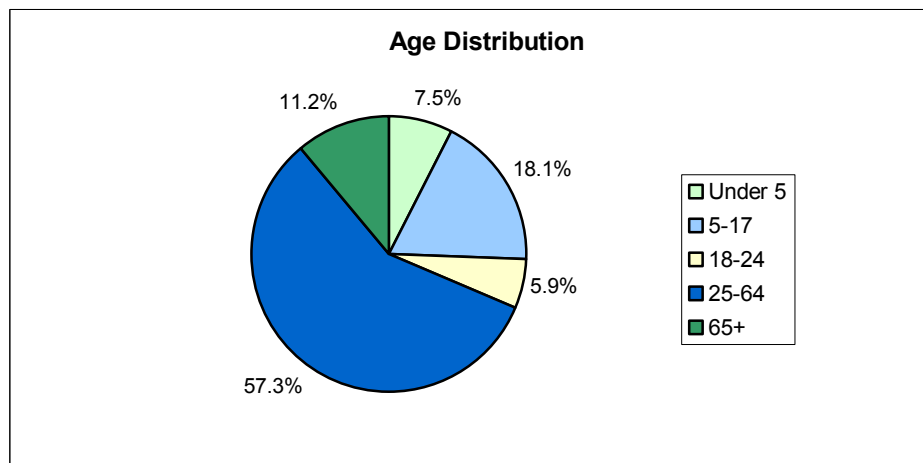


General Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 297,490 individuals reside in Somerset County's 21 municipalities. These individuals are spread out over a land area of 304.69 square miles, which translates into a population density of 976.4 persons per square mile. This makes Somerset County, ranked 13th, close to the mid-point in terms of county population.

At 23.8%, Somerset County had the most growth of any county in the state from 1990 to 2000. Three municipalities experienced reductions in their population over the past decade, and growth in the other municipalities varied, ranging from 6.8% for Somerville Borough (total 2000 population – 12,423) to 81.9% for Montgomery Township (total 2000 population – 17,481). Somerset County's two largest communities were also among those experiencing growth, with Franklin Township at 19% growth (total 2000 population – 50,903) and Bridgewater Township at 32.1% growth (total 2000 population – 42,940).

Somerset County has 75,991 children under the age of 18. They comprise 25.5% of the county's total population and 3.6% of the state's child population. Approximately 63% of Somerset County residents are of working age (18 through 64), and 11.2% are 65 years and older. Overall, at 37.2, the median age of Somerset County residents is slightly older than the statewide median of 36.7 years of age.



Child Welfare

Somerset County's portion of statewide child abuse and neglect referrals is less than the proportion of children residing in the county. While 3.6% of all children in New Jersey reside in Somerset County, 2.8%, or 1,087 of the child abuse and neglect referrals are generated there. Despite slight variations, the overall pattern of abuse and neglect resemble statewide percentages. However, compared to the state, a smaller proportion of referrals are substantiated in Somerset County, and the substantiated rate per 1,000 children is also lower.

Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals in 2001

	Somerset County		New Jersey	
	N	%	N	%
Physical abuse	329	30.3	12,382	32.0
Emotional abuse	27	2.5	330	0.9
Sexual	56	5.2	2,179	5.6
Neglect	612	56.3	22,099	57.1
Multiple types	63	5.8	1,716	4.4
<i>Total</i>	1,087	---	38,706	---
Substantiated rate per 1,000 children	2.3	---	4.0	---
Percent substantiated	15.7	---	21.8	---

In the Somerset County District Office, the active DYFS caseload is 698 children and 378 families. There are 104 in-state foster homes in Somerset County. There are 76 Somerset County children in foster care, which is 1% of the 7,807 children in foster care in New Jersey and less than the percentage of children residing in this county. Of the Somerset County children in foster care, 57.9% reside in a different county than their family, which is more than the out-of-county statewide average of 44.6%, and the fifth highest in the state.

From 1998 to 2002, out of a statewide total of 123 deaths of children as a result of abuse and neglect, there were no children from Somerset County. The number of all infants who died in Somerset County in 2000 was 18, 2.5% of the 723 infant deaths occurring in the state. The infant mortality rate of 4.1 deaths under the age of 1 per 1,000 live births was lower than the statewide rate of 6.3.¹

Child Welfare Outcome Measures

Information on various child welfare outcomes for Somerset County is presented in the following table.² There was no domain where Somerset County met the national

¹ The Center for Health Statistics, Department of Health and Senior Services notes that rates based on fewer than 20 deaths should be interpreted with caution.

² See definitions that follow for detailed descriptions of the categories presented in this table.

standards for child welfare outcomes. The incidence of abuse and neglect in foster care at 1.82% was much higher than the national standard of .57%. In addition, at 25.5%, the percentage re-entering foster care within twelve months of a previous foster care episode was the highest in the state and well in excess of the national standard of 8.6%. Another area of concern is the low percentage, 9.1%, of children exiting foster care for adoption who left their placement within 24 months, which is substantially less than the national standard of 32%.

2001 Child Welfare Outcome Measures by County

	Somerset	State	National Standard
Recurrence of maltreatment	7.0%	6.4%	6.1% or less
A/N incidence in foster care	1.82%	.78%	.57% or less
Reunify within 12 months without increasing re-entry	73.6%	59.5%	76.2% or more
Re-enter care within 12 months	25.5%	8.2%	8.6% or less
Reduce time in foster care to adoption	9.1%	16.3%	32.0% or more
Increase placement stability	78.6%	86.2%	86.7% or more

Note. Data supplied by DYFS

Definitions

Reduce recurrence of maltreatment – of children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first six months of the reporting period, the percentage who had another substantiated or indicated report within a six-month period.

A/N incidence in foster care – of children who were in foster care during the reporting period, the percentage that was the subject of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Reunify within 12 months without increasing re-entry – of children reunified with parents or caretakers at time of discharge from foster care, the percentage reunified within 12 months.

Re-enter care within 12 months – of children who entered foster care during the reporting period, the percentage that re-entered care within 12 months of leaving foster care episode.

Reduce time in foster care to adoption – of all children who exited foster care to adoption, the percentage who exited within 24 months.

Increase placement stability – of all children who had been in foster care less than 12 months, the percentage who had no more than two placement settings during that time period.

Data Sources

DYFS Approved Foster Homes File, 8/4/03
DYFS Caseload Activity Report (DAR-SISM-5), 8/1/03
DYFS, Child Abuse and Neglect in New Jersey Statistical Report for 2000
DYFS Child Abuse and Neglect in New Jersey Statistical Report for 2001
DYFS Foster Care File Extract, 6/6/03
DYFS Statewide Summary of Foster Homes (DAR-PCISM-1), 7/4/03
NJ Substantiated Abuse and Neglect Child Fatality Analysis for 1998-2002, July 2003
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Redistricting Data Summary File, Population for the Counties and Municipalities in New Jersey: 1990 and 2000 (PL1)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Geographic Comparison Table, Age and Sex (GCT-P5)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Geographic Comparison Table, Population, Housing Units, Area and Density (GCT-PH1-R)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Quick Table, QT-P2.
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Demographic Profiles, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics (DP-1)

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